Haviland, John

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OBITUARY NOTICE

OF

JOHN HAVILAND, ESQ.

BORN AT
GUNDENHAM MANOR
15 DECR 1792

DIED IN
PHILADELPHIA AMERICA
26 MARCH 1852

PRIVATE PLATE.

JOHN HAVILAND.

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[FROM THE JOURNAL OF PRISON DISCIPLINE, PUBLISHED BY THE "PHILADELPHIA [illegible] FOR ALLEVIATING THE MISERIES OF PUBLIC PRISONS. [illegible]]

PHILADELPHIA:
PRINTED BY ISAAC ASHMEAD.
1852.

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PRINTED BY ISAAC ASHMEAD.
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Gift of
Hon. Charles Sumner U.S.S.
of Boston.

ERRATUM.

On page 8, fifth line from the bottom, for Russian read Prussian.

OBITUARY NOTICE

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JOHN HAVILAND, ESQ.

It is not long since the Philadelphia Society for Alleviating the Miseries of Public Prisons recorded the decease of the last of its founders; the survivor of that little group of enlightened and benevolent men, who, in the year 1787, commenced the work of prison reform in Pennsylvania. The society has now to add to the roll of the departed, the name of one who is to be henceforth associated with the history of that reform, as the chief pioneer of its architectural progress. They who, in wisdom and the love of their kind, conceived the morality of our discipline, and their fellow-laborer who faithfully and earnestly and successfully sought to give to it an outward embodiment adapted to its complex designs, now sleep together. Our readers will participate in the interest with which we recall some of the leading incidents of a life so closely connected as was that of John Haviland, with the great subject to which our pages are devoted.

Mr. Haviland was born on the 15th of December, 1792, in the county of Somerset, England. He was the son of James Haviland, of Gundenham Manor, in that county, and of Ann,

daughter of the Rev. Benjamin Cobley, of Ide in the county of Devon, Rector of Dodbrook. His academic studies were completed in his native county; and as his tastes, even in boyhood, inclined him towards the profession of an architect, he removed to London, and became a pupil of James Elmes. His preparatory training under that gentleman had been scarcely finished, when his enterprise was solicited by inducements from abroad. A sister of his mother had married an officer of distinction in the Russian naval service, who was then Minister of Marine, under the Emperor Alexander, Count Morduinoff. As this gentleman was disposed to promote the advancement of his young relative, the latter hoped, through his influence, to obtain an appointment in the imperial corps of engineers, and promptly accepted an invitation from him to visit St. Petersburg. Upon arriving in Russia, and considering the various motives presented for the guidance of his future career, particularly the reports which had been received of the state of architecture in this country, and of the opening existing here for professional skill and activity, Mr. Haviland, in accordance with the advice of his friends, resolved to embark for America. He was furnished with letters of introduction, amongst which was one from General Von Sonntag, who had been a resident at Philadelphia, and whose sister Mr. Haviland subsequently married. He landed in this city in September, 1816.

With this portion of our sketch, there are associations which deserve to be mentioned, not only because of their intrinsic value, but because they are in beautiful harmony with later events, and must have influenced, in some degree, the thoughts and feelings of our architect. When the philanthropist Howard was at Cherson, in 1789–90, he formed an acquaintance with Admiral Morduinoff, then chief of the Black Sea fleet. Their relations soon ripened into those of an intimate friendship, which was cemented both by the amiable qualities

of the Russian officer, and by his warm sympathy with the feelings and plans of the reformer. When the latter fell a victim to the infection to which he had exposed himself, his last moments were attended by Morduinoff. The memory of this honorable friendship was reverently cherished by the survivor, who loved to dwell upon the discoveries and designs of the great Englishman; and we cannot doubt, that the young Haviland became an auditor of precious reminiscences. It is certain that the friend who shared the last sympathetic throb of the heart of Howard, was he whose hand was extended to guide towards our country the architect, under whose directing skill, was to arise the most complete embodiment which the world had seen, of Howard's reform.

It was not long after his arrival here, that Mr. Haviland found an opportunity for the exercise of his professional skill. Amongst his first public works was the Presbyterian church on Washington Square; an edifice which, compared with the latest of our churches, ranks well with respect to the chief conveniences of such a structure; and which, if judged by the buildings existing here at the date of its erection, gives a very favorable idea of the young artist's capability, and of the liberal scope of his mind. It is not, however, our purpose to review his works, except in connection with our penal institutions; towards which he soon found himself directed by the wants of his adopted state. After a series of appeals to the legislature, and finally to the public, the Prison Society, acting in conjunction with the officers of our prisons, had succeeded in obtaining (in 1818) the enactment of a law, authorizing the construction of a prison for convicts, at Pittsburg, in the western part of the State. Amongst the plans which were offered to the judgment of the commissioners, appointed to superintend the construction, was one presented by Mr. H. We regret not to be able through an inspection of this plan to exhibit the earliest conception of his

mind upon such a subject; the preference was given to another design, and his drawings are not within our reach. The choice of the commissioners was unfortunate, as there will be occasion hereafter to notice.

The insufficiency of the prisons in the eastern part of the State, became the motive to further applications to the government; and in the year 1821, an act of the legislature provided for the erection of a State Penitentiary, at Philadelphia. Mr. Haviland again entered into the competition of architects, and was successful in obtaining and maintaining the direction of the work, not only during its early progress, but until the completion of the last block of cells. As it is by this institution, that his reputation has been most widely extended, it may not be inappropriate to recall some of the peculiar circumstances in which his skill was exerted.

We are here reminded of the just observation of an English author, that "innumerable are the services to truth, to justice, or society, which never can be adequately valued by those who reap their benefits, simply because the transition from the early and bad state, to the final or improved state, cannot be retraced or kept alive before the eyes. The record perishes. The last point gained is seen; but the starting point, the point *from* which it was gained, is forgotten." This remark is the more impressive when applied to human works upon any subject which, from its nature, tends always to an improvement keeping pace with the special experience, and with the general enlightenment of a community. That which costs an effort to the most enterprising inventor of to-day, will shortly become familiar; then the basis of new reforms; and finally, will rank only as one of the earliest of a long series of developments. The tendency to generalize, and to mistake resemblances which are easily seen after a contrivance has become familiar, for the real succession of ideas by which a reformer was led to his

discoveries and plans, has always had the effect to conceal from posterity the true difficulties of any achievement in their behalf. Hence the influence properly attributable to the intervention of an individual in the affairs of society, cannot be accurately judged, unless there be first considered the state of the case as it appeared to his immediate predecessors, and his contemporaries. It will of course be impossible, within the limits allotted to this sketch, to do more than indicate the topics to which the reader's attention is invited; yet enough may be said to lead him easily to the principal grounds of the conclusion which the writer has in view.

The visits of Howard to the prisons of Europe, had brought to public notice not only the miserable condition of the discipline in most of them, but also many of their principal defects of construction. The modifications of interior management first suggested for convicts in England, and subsequently enlarged and carried into successful operation in Pennsylvania, required great alterations of material structure. The design was to pass from a state of things, in which there was an indiscriminate association of prisoners without labor, without instruction, without government, almost without restraint, except that of walls, chains, and the brutal tyranny of the strongest or boldest among the prisoners, to a state in which separation, good order, cleanliness, labor, instruction, and ready and continual supervision should be maintained, within the limits of such fiscal economy as public opinion and resources rendered expedient. The earliest and most noted experiments were made at Horsham, Petworth, and Gloucester, in England; and in the old Walnut street gaol, at Philadelphia. The record of these attempts fortunately still remains; and it would be superfluous to discuss their want of adaptedness to any large scheme of separate discipline. The next remarkable effort was at Pittsburg, where a circular prison was erected, so illy suited to its

objects, that in less than ten years after its completion, it was demolished. The next step of progress was the erection of the Eastern Penitentiary; and it must be obvious, that much was involved in the success or failure of its architect. There was not in all Europe a building suited to the objects of the contemplated work. Since the alteration of the Walnut street gaol, there had been more than a quarter of a century of observation and reflection, and discussion; and the principal monument of these, visible amongst ourselves, was the Western Penitentiary, which had not yet been tried, and which was at that time recommended not only by the professional judgment which devised it, but by what is often more influential, the prestige of government favor, and public expectation. It was in such circumstances, that Mr. Haviland undertook to solve the problem entrusted to him. It is probable, that he scanned, as he was bound to do, all the resources of his profession, as far as these had been manifested in structures within reach of his means of information. It is probable that he felt the importance of his position, and that he inquired anxiously; and that he labored intently upon the materials of design, availing himself of light from every quarter; but let us judge of his procedure by its result. The chief objects of prison architecture, sought by the friends of separate discipline, were for the first time attained. The impression upon the public mind was so remarkable, that it must fix the attention of the most careless reviewer; and we have, moreover, been furnished with a test of unusual value, by which to determine how far our architect comprehended his position. The British government meditating a change of penal discipline, and the French and Russian governments with a like design, sent commissioners to the United States, to examine the penitentiaries. Those gentlemen had previous knowledge of prison architecture in Europe; and they visited the prisons of greatest reputation in America; and

they found our discipline administered with a success unparalleled. When they returned to their respective governments, the plans which they reported for adoption, were essentially the same with that of the Eastern Penitentiary. During their visits to Philadelphia, they received from Mr. Haviland, communications of his experience, which were made to them with the generous frankness which eminently characterized him as a professional man. Some idea of the impression produced by his work, and by his liberal zeal for the promotion of good construction abroad, may be formed from the following translated extract, from a letter addressed to him by the French commissioner, M. Blouet, himself a distinguished architect. It accompanied a copy of his official report, presented in the joint names of himself, and his associate commissioner, M. Demetz.

"M. Demetz and myself, request your acceptance of a copy of the report which we have made to our government at the termination of the mission, upon which we visited the United States to examine your penitentiary system. As you may see by our report, the establishments constructed by yourself have been the chief source from which we have drawn; and they are also the models which we propose as the best, and the most perfectly conceived for satisfying the physical and the moral conditions of penitentiary reform. We hope that you will accept the particular expression of our sincere compliments, upon the very honorable part which you have had in the erection of establishments so remarkable in every point of view.

"For myself, sir, as an architect, I cannot too often repeat to you that both the design, and the execution of your works have interested me in the highest degree; and it gives me real pleasure to offer you my sincere thanks for the obliging manner in which you have furnished me with the information needed for my studies in your interesting country."

Such testimony is the more impressive, when we remember

that it comes from a gentleman who had not only exhibited convincing proofs of his fitness for the responsible duty to which he was called by his government, but who had at the same time shown his freedom from the constraints of mere imitation. As justly remarked by M. Moreau-Christophe, the plan of Mr. Haviland was not servilely copied; but while endeavoring to accommodate some of its details to peculiarities of religion, national character and climate, M. Blouet rendered his hearty tribute of acknowledgment, alike honorable to himself and to its object, for the reform which he had witnessed in the main elements of the design.

The most striking mode of illustrating the facts, is to assemble plans of the chief prisons erected before the Eastern Penitentiary, and to compare them with the plans of separate prisons for convicts, since constructed. It will be apparent at the first glance, that there has been a sudden and radical change, and that the Eastern Penitentiary is the head of the new series. Even in many particulars, in which the old and the new forms may exhibit a resemblance, there will be found an essential difference in the principle of the design; the same feature being found to have a different object, or a different relative value.

The influence of the reputation acquired by such success, was immediately felt in the enlargement of Mr. Haviland's sphere of professional exertion. At the same time that he was occupied with the completion of the series of cell-blocks at Cherry Hill, he was also engaged upon several other similar works. The Western Penitentiary having been proved to be unsuited to its objects, he was invited, about the year 1834, to superintend its reconstruction in conformity with the plan of the Eastern. The authorities of the county of Alleghany requested his direction of the prison of that county, then about to be built; and he also drew the plan of its Court House. The

State Penitentiary of New Jersey, was built by him after the model of Pennsylvania; and he also designed and superintended the erection of the prison of Essex county, in New Jersey, and the Halls of Justice, (the city prison,) of New York. The nearly simultaneous direction of these buildings at places very remote one from another, required an extraordinary energy and power of endurance. In 1841, the prison of Dauphin county was constructed by him at Harrisburg, the capital of the State; and it was at that time generally regarded as the best example in this country of a small county jail. It would be unfair to judge of the details of the preceding works, by a comparison of them with the latest and most costly specimens of this class of buildings. The English government at a great expense, and with a generous liberality of encouragement, of which there was no parallel in the United States, procured a series of experiments upon the ventilation of large buildings, and upon the fitness of various kinds of walls for the necessities of our discipline; and authorized the construction of a model prison, upon which were lavished the best science and art within reach of the commissioners; and the result was naturally an improvement in the details of contrivance, as well as in the material execution of these. The heating, ventilation, means of prompt communication, and other particulars of security and comfort were established by methods superior to any which had been previously in use in this country. The yards for exercise, which as first tried at Cherry Hill, were found to shade too much the cells on the ground floor, were detached and placed in the spaces between the blocks. The warden's dwelling, which in the Eastern Penitentiary had been erected on the circumference of the radii, at a distance from the centre of supervision, (because of an original intention to have eight blocks of cells, instead of seven,) was fixed in its more suitable relative position. These changes, however, some of which were recom-

mended by Mr. H. himself to the foreign commissioners who visited us,* do not diminish the weight due to the fact, that upon the construction of the Eastern Penitentiary, there was a sudden change of model; and that that establishment was the type of the new form, as respects essential features.

Notwithstanding the pride reasonably inspired by the flattering evidence of his success, it is one of the most creditable reminiscences connected with the professional career of Mr. Haviland, that instead of resting upon what he had accomplished, instead of reluctantly yielding to the evidence of progress in Europe, he was prompt to seek and to employ in his own later designs, what ever new details he found to be sufficiently recommended by theoretical or experimental evidence. The funds at his disposal for the erection of county jails, were not adequate to the most perfect elaboration of his own, or other conceptions; but it may be seen that when called upon, as he was not long after the completion of the Dauphin county prison, to build one with forty cells for the county of Berks, in Pennsylvania; he availed himself of the opportunity to introduce some of the most recent conveniences of arrangement. In Lancaster county, where his services were next required, he exhibited the same professional interest. The prison of this county had not been long occupied, when he was summoned from his career of public usefulness. He died suddenly at his residence in Philadelphia, on the 28th day of March last.

We have, though necessarily in a brief and imperfect manner, adverted to the peculiar claims of Mr. Haviland, to the grateful recollection of every friend of the separate discipline; because in the progress of events, it may have happened that

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* For example, in the New Jersey State Penitentiary, the plan of which was inspected by the English and French commissioners, the warden's department is in immediate connection with the observatory.

some of our readers have lost sight of that record of the "early and bad state," which is requisite to judge rightly of his merits as the leader towards the present "improved state" of prison construction. Those who shall hereafter witness signal triumphs of benevolence and skill, to which his labors have opened the way, may—and if the fortune which has awaited even the most eminent of reformers shall not be reversed, probably will—fail to conceive the full measure of his contributions towards the crowning result; but while a tradition survives amongst his associates in prison reform, and their successors in Pennsylvania, his name will not cease to be mentioned with honorable distinction.

Amongst the memorials which he has left in other departments of his art, we might refer to the United States Naval Hospital at Norfolk, Virginia; and the Pennsylvania State Lunatic Asylum, recently finished at the capital of this State; both of which institutions manifest in a high degree the industrious preparation, the sound judgment, the economy, and the practical skill, which he employed upon his designs. Regarding his function as that of an exponent of the knowledge which enlightened observation had gathered from experience, his first step was to acquaint himself with the best conceptions of those for whom he was to interpret by physical structure; and he wrought with fidelity to express those conceptions by the most fitting external fabric; but our limits compel us to abstain from a notice of these and similar works.

In conclusion, it must be added, that while witnessing the establishment of his reputation, in a manner rarely exampled in the history of his profession in modern times, especially where the object has not been to minister to the wonder and delight of the multitude, Mr. Haviland maintained a singular modesty of deportment and of speech, even amongst those who knew most intimately the interest which his success had ex-

cited in his own bosom. He was frank and amiable in his intercourse, and liberal in the instruction of those who sought his advice upon the important subject of his principal thoughts. He has left to his survivors and to posterity the example of an unpretending, but eminently useful career.

At a meeting of the Philadelphia Prison Society, held soon after his decease, the President, in appropriate terms, announced the decease of Mr. Haviland; and the following resolutions were unanimously adopted, and ordered to be printed in the Society's Journal.

Resolved, That the members of the society have learned, with sincere regret, the loss of their late fellow-laborer, John Haviland, whose efforts to develop the architecture of the separate system of imprisonment, have contributed greatly to its convenient administration in Pennsylvania, and to the establishment of the principal features of its methods of construction in other parts of the world in which it has been introduced.

Resolved, That the society desire to record their appreciation of the zeal and fidelity with which their deceased friend sought to promote by suitable architectural means, those enlightened and humane opinions upon which the separate system is founded; as well as to introduce where the opportunity was afforded to him, for its better administration, whatever improvements were suggested by experience, whether at home or abroad.

Resolved, That the President be requested to communicate to the family of the deceased, the sincere and respectful sympathy felt by the members of the society, in relation to the recent bereavement.